

## American Community Survey (ACS) Topic Information: Veterans

### Subject Definitions

#### **Veteran Status**

For ACS data products, a “civilian veteran” is a person 18 years old or over who has served (even for a short time), but is not now serving, on active duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or the Coast Guard, or who served in the U.S. Merchant Marine during World War II.

People who served in the National Guard or military Reserves are classified as veterans only if they were ever called or ordered to active duty, not counting the 4-6 months for initial training or yearly summer camps. All other civilians 18 years old and over are classified as nonveterans.

A screenshot of a survey question, numbered 25 in a black circle. The question text is: "Has this person ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? Active duty does not include training for the Reserves or National Guard, but DOES include activation, for example, for the Persian Gulf War." Below the question are five radio button options:

- ☐ Yes, now on active duty
- ☐ Yes, on active duty during the last 12 months, but not now
- ☐ Yes, on active duty in the past, but not during the last 12 months
- ☐ No, training for Reserves or National Guard only → SKIP to question 27a
- ☐ No, never served in the military → SKIP to question 28

#### **Period of Military Service**

People who indicated that they had served on active duty or were now on active duty were asked to indicate the period or periods in which they served. The responses to the question about period of service were edited for consistency and reasonableness. The edit eliminated inconsistencies between reported period(s) of service and age of the person; it also removed reported combinations of periods containing unreasonable gaps (for example, it did not accept a response that indicated that the person had served in World War II and in the Vietnam era, but not in the Korean conflict).

**26** When did this person serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces? Mark (X) a box for EACH period in which this person served, even if just for part of the period.

- ☐ September 2001 or later
- ☐ August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)
- ☐ September 1980 to July 1990
- ☐ May 1975 to August 1980
- ☐ Vietnam era (August 1964 to April 1975)
- ☐ March 1961 to July 1964
- ☐ February 1955 to February 1961
- ☐ Korean War (July 1950 to January 1955)
- ☐ January 1947 to June 1950
- ☐ World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)
- ☐ November 1941 or earlier

#### **Service-connected Disability Status and Ratings**

Beginning in 2008, two new questions about service-connected disability status and ratings were added to the American Community Survey (ACS). These questions are asked of all people who indicate they had previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard, they had trained with the Reserves or National Guard, or they were currently on active duty.

**27** a. Does this person have a VA service-connected disability rating?

- ☐ Yes (such as 0%, 10%, 20%, ... , 100%)
- ☐ No → SKIP to question 28

b. What is this person's service-connected disability rating?

- ☐ 0 percent
- ☐ 10 to 20 percent
- ☐ 30 to 40 percent
- ☐ 50 to 60 percent
- ☐ 70 percent or higher

***Service-connected Disability Status***

People who indicated they had served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard, or trained with the Reserves or National Guard or were now on active duty were asked to indicate whether or not they had a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) service-connected disability rating. These disabilities are evaluated according to the VA's Schedule for Rating Disabilities in Title 38, U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4. "Service-connected" means the disability was a result of disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service.

***Service-connected Disability Rating***

This question is asked of people who reported having a VA service-connected disability rating. Ratings are graduated according to the degree of the veteran's disability on a scale from 0 to 100 percent, in increments of 10 percent. Zero percent is a valid rating and is different than having no rating at all.

**Limitations of the Data*****Veteran Status***

There may be a tendency for the following kinds of persons to report erroneously that they served on active duty in the Armed Forces: (a) persons who served in the National Guard or Military Reserves but were never called to duty; (b) civilian employees or volunteers for the USO, Red Cross, or the Department of Defense (or its predecessors, the Department of War and the Department of the Navy); and (c) employees of the Merchant Marine or Public Health Service. Beginning in 2006, the population in group quarters (GQ) is included in the ACS. Some types of GQ populations may have period of military service and veteran status distributions that are different from the household population. The inclusion of the GQ population could therefore have a noticeable impact on the period of service and veteran status distributions. This is particularly true for areas with a substantial GQ population.

***Period of Military Service***

There may be a tendency for people to mark the most recent period in which they served or the period in which they began their service, but not all periods in which they served.

***Service-connected Disability Status and Ratings***

There may be a tendency for people to erroneously report having a 0 percent rating when they have no service-connected disability rating at all.

## **Data Uses**

### ***Service in the U.S. Armed Forces***

- Used at state and county levels to plan programs for medical and nursing home care for veterans.
- Needed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to plan the locations and sizes of veterans' cemeteries.
- Used by local agencies, under the Older Americans Act, to develop health care and other services for elderly veterans.
- Used to allocate funds to states and local areas for employment and job training programs for veterans under the Job Training Partnership Act.
- Used primarily by the Department of Veterans Affairs to measure the needs of veterans. Answers to these questions provide specific information about veterans. They ask if the person ever served and if so when. Veteran status is used to identify people with active duty military service and service in the military Reserves and the National Guard. ACS data define civilian veteran as a person 18 years old and over who served (even for a short time), but is not now serving on acting duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard, or who served as a Merchant Marine seaman during World War II. Individuals who have training for Reserves or National Guard but no active duty service are not considered veterans in the ACS. Period of military service distinguishes veterans who served during wartime periods from those whose only service was during peacetime. Questions about period of military service provide necessary information to estimate the number of veterans who are eligible to receive specific benefits.

### ***Service-connected Disability Status and Ratings***

- Used by the Department of Veterans Affairs to measure the demand for VA health care services in local market areas across the country.
- Used by the Department of Veterans Affairs to classify veterans into priority groups for VA health care enrollment.
- VA uses a priority system to allocate health care services among veterans enrolled in its programs. The question first asks if the veteran has a service-connected disability rating and then asks what the rating is. A response of '0 percent' is acceptable and different from not having a rating.